

## W2ASACT MEETING NOTES

Meeting on January 12, 2021, 10 am to 12 pm

Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation – Montana Conference Room & Conference Call

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### Members and participants present via Conference Phone and in person:

Alex Huffield	KLJ Eng	Kristy Kline	MRWS
Amy Stimech	DEQ	Laura Dunlap	Morrison Maierle
Anna Miller	DNRC - CARDD	Lindsay Volpe	DNRC - CARDD
Autumn Coleman	DNRC - CARDD	Maria Jackson	GWE
Bryant Higgs	APE	Mark Smith	DEQ – WRF/SRF
David Larson	DNRC - CARDD	Michelle Pond	MAP
Denise Cook	DNRC - CARDD	Rick Duncan	DNRC - CARDD
Erinn Zindt	MAP	Rick Thompson	DEQ
Jason Crawford	Triple Tree Eng	Roger Skogan	MRWS
Kari Smith	DEQ	Sonja Hoeglund	DNRC - CARDD

AIS – Aquatic Invasive Species  
APE – Advanced Pump & Equipment  
DEQ - DRF – Drinking Water State Revolving Loan program  
DEQ – Montana Department of Environmental Quality  
DEQ - WRF – Drinking Water State Revolving Loan program  
DNRC - SRF - Wastewater State Revolving Loan program  
DNRC – WRF - Drinking Water State Revolving Loan program  
FDB – Financial Development Bureau  
KLJ – Kadmas Lee & Jackson Engineering  
MAP – Midwest Assistance Program  
MBOI – Montana Board of Investments  
MRWS – Montana Rural Water Systems  
RATES – Rural and Tribal Environmental Solutions  
RDB – Resource Development Bureau  
TSEP – Treasure State Endowment Program

### At DNRC:

Anna Miller and Denise Cook, DNRC – CARDD. Bryant Higgs, APE, Bozeman

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### Call to Order, Sign-in Sheet, Agenda Changes

Anna Miller, Chair, called the scheduled meeting of the Water, Wastewater and Solid Waste Action Coordinating Team (W2ASACT) to order at 10:00 am, on Tuesday, January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The draft minutes from the November 10<sup>th</sup> meeting, which were previously emailed to the WASACT group, were approved and adopted by those present on site and via telephone. Anna conducted a “roll call” of those connected by phone. We had 18 members present via phone and 3 on site.

**No guest speaker. Discussion began on grant cycles, rural water, project funding, Montana's 67<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session, the Federal stimulus plan and concerns relating to the COVID 19 Pandemic.**

## **Legislative Issues**

### Anna Miller, DNRC

Anna said the Legislative Session is underway. The joint project hearings start January 21<sup>st</sup>. The other day there was a hearing on HB 62 which authorizes the SRF to issue more debt. There are a couple of bills we will watch. HB 107 and Senate Bills 77 and 78 are bills that MRW and MAP may want to watch. They eliminate financing options for local governments.

Anna began by saying the Legislative Session is different this year. For in-person testimony, there is only one person at a time allowed in the hearing room. She suggested looking at the hearing schedule online and wearing a mask when at the capital.

### Lindsay Volpe, DNRC

Lindsay said since the session has remote component, we at DNRC may not be able to assist you with questions as easily. The 34 joint-funded projects (water and wastewater) will be before a committee starting on January 21<sup>st</sup>. We will have a map and photo of projects for the committee in advance.

DNRC is providing Zoom training on 2 days to help prepare those who will be appearing before committees and want to use Zoom to attend hearings. Autumn is preparing a Power Point presentation. Lindsay encouraged all to please ask questions. Anna offered to help those working remote, to get handouts, etc. to the capital before hearings. She offered to have items submitted to her. Autumn added that there is a rundown of how to submit testimony on the legislative website. Anna said some committee members like to have hard copies of items to go with testimony.

Anna continued by saying that Senator Mike Cuff is back as Vice Chair and Senator Cary Smith is back from last session. There are not many seats for those waiting to testify and in the hearing rooms themselves. We will let you know as we hear of changes. Contact Lindsay Volpe or Autumn Coleman for help with Zoom. Lindsay will put some informational links on the WASACT website. Anna added that upon entering the capital, there is an electronic temperature check station.

## **Stimulus Plan**

Anna spoke with Senator Testor's office and they had no stimulus plan updates. The impeachment of President Trump could impede the stimulus plan process. The Biden Cabinet confirmation will occur first. The stimulus plan could be like the ARRA Obama plan.

### Workshop – Autumn Coleman

Autumn said there is nothing new. We are planning how to communicate with people and how to reach out without being able to travel and get together.

Erin Zindt added January 26<sup>th</sup> is the next workshop call and she will provide and update after that.

### Uniform Application and Standard Documents

David Larson said that everything is good on the uniform application. The new Section 0900 will get on the website. There will be two new AIS forms to fill out. By the end of the month, those should be up. Ryan Urbanic with USDA – RD will help with the Uniform & Standard Documents.

**Congressional Update** – Anna said we will post any updates on the WASACT website or send an email to the group.

### **Program Updates** (Continued)

#### Amy Steinmetz, DEQ

SB 42 may provide schools to use maintenance funds for lead mitigation. Amy said she is working on a public interface to inform communities.

#### Autumn Coleman, DNRC

Her bureau is focusing on business beyond the Legislative Session. We are looking at how we conduct better business with folks. Autumn asked if others know where we can help. She said please let us know if you have ideas.

#### Kristi Kline, Montana Rural Water

Kristi reminded the group that the March MRW conference will be May 19, 20 and 21. 2021 at the Heritage Inn in Great Falls. MRW will sign a 5-year contract for a circuit writer. MRW has had some employees test positive for COVID-19. They are trying to figure out workshops for the next 6 months.

#### David Larson, DNRC

David reported that there is \$56,000 left for the biennium in the Emergency Grant Program. Anna asked if anyone heard about Antelope Water and Sewer District. David replied that TSEP spoke with one of the engineers at Antelope Water and Sewer District.

Erinn Zindt, Midwest Assistance Program (MAP)

Due to some operators resigning quickly and other changes, they are working to provide technical assistance. Things seem volatile at times.

Kari Smith, DEQ

Kari said they are looking to have the Customer Satisfaction Survey out in January.

Lindsay Volpe, DNRC Renewable Resource Grant Program Manager

We are watching HB 6 and 14 and tracking funding for 36 projects affected by those bills. There are no updates on planning grants as funding on those is frozen. Hopefully by July 1<sup>st</sup>, we will know something.

Anna added that limited Coal Tax funding is affecting our revenues. We are looking at replacement funding from say, the General Fund. She said please support bills which will secure funding to help communities.

Maria Jackson with Great West Engineering

Great West is busy tracking Legislative hearings. Other than that, Maria said there is nothing out of the norm in her office. Anna asked if people are interested in being involved with hearings and Maria said yes, their clients are interested in being there.

Laura Dunlap, Morrison Maierle

Laura reported that she is seeing a mix of interest in involvement in the session as some are and some are not going to be at the hearings in person.

Mark Smith, Engineering Manager with DEQ Water Quality

Mark said there is a lot going on in the Engineering bureau. They are also gearing up for Spring construction season.

Anna Miller, DNRC Financial Advisor

The Federal Omnibus Bill passed for a full year. We did get an SRF allocation. We will provide an update in June. Anna said if you have projects, make sure to get your application in so we can demonstrate the need for funding and get your projects ready for construction season.

Rick Duncan DNRC Regional Water System Program Manager

Rick asked if the Antelope project was wastewater and David replied yes. Rick said they are on Fort Peck Dry Prairie Regional Water System.

**Fort Peck Dry Prairie** – The Assiniboine Sioux Regional Water System received the full requested amount of operational and maintenance funding of \$3.3M. Combined, the

Tribal system and Dry Prairie will receive \$30M for construction and may be ahead of schedule for completion of the regional systems in 2023.

As of December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, Scobey is receiving water. The details are unknown for Flaxville and Whitetail at this time. The Westby segment will be complete by July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021. The branch lines around Scobey and Westby are also under construction. The Opheim branch from Saint Marie to Opheim is next. Construction of the Glasgow office building is 72% complete.

**Rocky Boys. North Central** – Work continues on the first phase of the water treatment plant. Rick is hoping to have an update on construction at the end of the month. Ninemile and Oilmont service is imminent providing installation of new UV reactors at Shelby wellfield and completion of the water rights process. Planning for future project phases is taking place.

**Central Montana** (Musselshell-Judith Regional System) – Great West Engineering is working with CMRWA on construction. They are waiting to hear from RD on a pipeline project from the Ubet wellfield to Harlowton. CMRWA has federal authorization signed on December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

**Dry Redwater** – Authorization was given for Dry Redwater to work with Bureau of Reclamation on the planning feasibility study for the system.

Rick said the Central Montana authorization is huge and will help bring water to many small communities.

## **Committee Updates**

### Rick Thompson, DEQ

There is nothing new in the solid waste world. Rick is working with Autumn Coleman.

### Alex Huffield, KLJ

Becky works more on Legislation. Alex said it is business as usual at KLJ.

### Jason Crawford, Triple Tree Engineering

Jason said that applications are into the funding program. Many clients are participating via Zoom. The folks who live closer will attend in person. He added that the emails concerning the Legislative session are helpful

End of Updates

Next WASACT meeting date is tentatively set for April 13, 2021.

Anna reminded all to look for Legislative updates. HB 6 will affect RRGL and HB 8 Reclamation grant projects. HB 14 can carry projects forward not funded in HB 6, 7 & 11 and will be funded by GO Bonds. If you need to get items to the Legislative committees, let us know if you need help. Hopefully there will be a Federal Stimulus package. We may see something in March 2021. Get your application into us so if we get word, we can move forward.

Meeting adjourned at 10:56.

Minutes taken by Denise Cook and will be reviewed by Anna Miller and Rick Duncan. Minutes approved at April 13, 2021 meeting.